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Austin Hale Notes and Summaries on Discourse

OUTLINE OF PRELIMINARY PROCEDURES FOR DISCOVERING DISCOURSE STRUCTURE

Thomas Bearth*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is a slightly updated version of the Ivory Coast Technical Studies Department Memo No. 2, May 1972.[1] It is intended to provide guidelines for the initial steps in analyzing discourse structure. No attempt has been made to update the bibliographic references since these are available from other sources.

There is no need to prove the necessity of a careful study of grammatical structures pertaining to so-called 'higher levels', i.e. to levels of the grammatical hierarchy ranking from above the clause to discourse. Not only is it justified for the sake of completeness of analysis and description--as a sort of linguistic sport for fanatics--but there is sufficient evidence to show that without a thorough study of 'higher level' phenomena serious mistakes can be expected in the translation process; all the more so since even outstanding translation helpers are not usually aware of the necessity of adjustments at these levels. Particularly at the beginning, the responsibility for this aspect of the translation is entirely with the linguist (see W.A.A. Wilson, 1972, and Margaret Scheffler, 1969.) A solid knowledge of 'higher level' features is also a big help in evaluating and editing vernacular texts. In addition, many features of the clause can only be really understood as they are studied in the context of discourse; this at least seems to be a widespread tendency in West African languages.

With all this in mind it would seem to be sensible to start serious analysis of the higher levels as early as possible, i.e. at the moment when one starts working with native texts, rather than delaying it until everything else has fallen into place. However, the reason why the analysis is not usually carried right through to discourse level--or, at least one reason--is that no handy discovery procedures or methods of presentation of higher level phenomena, such as have been worked out for the lower levels, are available. It is hoped that this memo will be a first step towards providing some help in this direction. (Now see Robert Longacre and Stephen Levinsohn, 'Field Analysis of Discourse'. This paper offers an overview of research topics on the subject of discourse and proposes a charting technique for beginning the study of a text.)

2. TENTATIVE SEGMENTATION

Once a text has been established and translated it should be possible, working from discourse level downwards, to locate potential boundaries of higher level units by using the translated text. In a narrative such boundaries are likely to occur at those points where one of the following changes: main actor; major unit of activity or complex of events; time setting; location; discourse genre (i.e. type of content: narrative, explanatory, hortatory, etc.); kind of information (background vs. foreground, narrator's digressions). In non-narrative text change of theme frequently corresponds with a higher level juncture. These changes are likely to correspond with boundaries between larger subdivisions of the text, but this is not always the case. They are indicated here

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because they are the points at which one should look first for relevant formal phenomena.

Smaller subdivisions are sometimes more difficult to spot. They may correspond with changes of subject or with phases of activity within major units of activity, or with other less obvious factors.

It should be emphasised that this first step has merely a heuristic value. Any observations drawn from it have to be supported by formal features of the text.

3. FORMAL FEATURES

In this section we shall simply give a list of formal features which are typically found to characterise higher level units of various sizes. The following list is not exhaustive nor is each feature able to be unambiguously assigned to one and only one type of boundary or unit in a language. Rather, the list is intended to provide viewpoints from which to approach texts.

These viewpoints are sometimes complementary. For example, selection features (3.4) may be initial or final markers of a unit at the same time. The features are also complementary because they are always relative to the level at which they operate. Thus, what serves as an initial or final marker at one level may, simultaneously, function as a connective feature at the next higher level.

The following features will be presented in more detail: (1) Juncture features: initial and final markers; (2) Sequence: internal structures/arrangement; (3) Connective features: conjunctions, etc.; (4) Selection: aspects/clause and sentence types; (5) Identificational features: introduction of participants, reference; (6) Prominence: information structure; (7) Phonetic features; (8) Miscellaneous features.

3.1 Juncture Features

The following slots are usually found discourse initially: title (characteristic of discourse level); address, 'listen to what I am going to say', 'excuse me please'; temporal setting, 'it was in olden times...'; introduction of participants, 'a king was there'.

While some of these slots may be obligatory, others will occur optionally or only with certain subtypes of narrative. Different introductory slots tend to mark the beginning of public speeches, conversations (greetings and other stereotypes fill initial slots), and other types of discourse.

In all cases, it is very important to note carefully the particular features associated with the introduction:

(a) Obligatory vs. optional occurrence of slots.

(b) Fixed order of slots. Title and address will probably precede temporal setting and introduction of participants in most languages.

(c) Particles and interjections selected.

(d) Selection of special grammatical forms: title may take the form of a question with certain types of narratives, while in other types it may take an

elliptical form; emphasis or focus on newly introduced participant; use of conversational particles with 'address'; occurrence of certain aspects and tenses to the exclusion of other in introductory slots; presence or absence of connectives typical of the main body of the narrative.

(e) Selection of lexical items, such as the formulae of greeting or public address. For example, in Toura folktales, a typical participant introduction is as follows: 'king one certain was there.' The participant's name is followed by a marker of number 'one' and by an indeterminate marker, 'certain'. The predicate consists of the most generic verb, the copula, occurring in nonspecified past and indicates 'past' as a general time setting. If there is more than one participant, 'there' can be replaced by '(such and such were) in friendship'. But the possibilities of substitution are very limited within the 'participant introduction clause': e.g. a village name in the location slot would be unacceptable in a folk tale. Hence, there is lexical selection.

(f) Expansion potential. Some of the introductory slots may be expandable while others are not. For example, participant introduction may be followed by a description of some particular feature which characterises the participant (his occupation, something he said, his status, etc.).

Within the discourse, the address, temporal setting and introduction of participants slots may introduce major subdivisions. Although the features themselves will differ somewhat from discourse introduction, basically, the same criteria apply: Temporal settings will include a wider range of temporal margins as well as 'pro-margins' (Longacre), such as 'then'. It may also typically include locative and circumstantial margins--'if...' and 'when...' clauses. Introduction of participants will include both patterns of introduction for new participants or new themes, and reintroduction of participants already known.

The conclusion of narrative discourse consists typically of paragraphs like the following: summary (characteristic of discourse level); result, 'Thus the rich became poor and the poor rich.'; application (Two types are: explanation, 'that's why this species of ape has no tail' or 'that's why some women are childless'; and the moral, 'don't despise the poor'.); close- 'That's it', 'I stop here', 'It's me who spoke' (A variant of this, 'It was me, X.Y., who spoke at Kpata', could be spontaneous adaptation of a current closing formula to the particular situation of recording story tellers.), or 'long live the party' (end of political speech).

Fillers of these slots tend to be formally marked off from the main thread of the narrative in a number of ways: (a) selection of tenses, aspects and moods (e.g., hortatory mood in the moral); (b) shift to direct address of listeners, or use of hortatory 2nd person pronoun (mainly in the application); (c) use of particular introducers and terminals ('this means...' or '...that's what it means') some of which may not occur anywhere else, or of stereotyped formulae 'the meaning of the story is this'; (d) use of features more typical of conversation than of proper narrative, like emphatics, conversational particles, focus, etc.; (e) more complex sentences than in ordinary narrative; (f) elliptical sentences.

Just as with the introductory section of discourse, it is important to note obligatory vs. optional occurrence of the various slots and particular features; fixed vs. free arrangement of slots; and possible expansions within the slots.

Terminal marking of internal subdivisions of discourse tends to be somewhat less conspicuous. Watch, for example, for the following: (a) marked pause

(characteristic of paragraph level); (b) final intonation, slowdown, downdrift of melody, sandhi; (c) terminal particle (In Toura, a final particle le terminates a phase or span of activity; narrative paragraphs are composed of activity phases.); (d) special tense/aspect markers; (e) discontinuation of connective devices operating within the unit under consideration; (f) initial marker of subsequent unit.

3.2 Sequence

The structure of each unit (discourse, paragraph, etc.) can be described in terms of the sequence of units of the next lower level; sometimes the sequence also includes embedded units of the same or of a higher level. Thus the discourse is composed of paragraphs or embedded discourses, the paragraph of sentences or embedded paragraphs or discourses, and so on. There are various types of paragraphs, sentences, etc. (in turn largely differentiated by their internal structure accountable in terms of lower level and embedded units), and these types tend to occur in a given larger structure in non-random distribution. Inasmuch as their distribution is ordered, there is a relevant feature of sequence or order. To take a simple illustration, a narrative discourse may contain an introductory paragraph, one or more nuclear paragraphs (the proper narrative), and a conclusion paragraph. These paragraphs each represent a different type, with different internal structure. Obviously, they occur in a fixed order.

In order to account for the structure of higher level units it is necessary to discover, at least approximately, the hierarchical pattern of the language. There are wide divergences. For some languages as many as five clearly defined levels from clause to discourse are posited: clause, sentence, episode, paragraph, discourse. On the other hand, in the Bimoba language (Ghana) there is no pervasive evidence for a paragraph level; Gill Jacobs accounts for her data in terms of clause, sentence and discourse.

Establishing the hierarchical patterns in West African languages is often difficult--particularly in defining the level between clause (or clause complex) and narrative paragraph, i.e. a unit which could be called sentence. Clauses are directly organised in serial constructions which may be of considerable size. Some prefer to call this larger unit 'string'; others may call it sentence. It should be pointed out, however, that non-narrative types of discourse in the same language may have a clear-cut sentence level which, in turn, integrates into the paragraph. It may help in such cases to set up separate hierarchies, at least in the beginning, for different types of discourse.

3.3 Connective Features

It can be assumed that different procedures will be utilised for connecting the elements of discourse according to the different underlying relations existing between the elements. Connectives are one of the main criteria for distinguishing types of discourse (genre) and within a discourse, types of paragraph, etc. Usually, there is a particular set of connective features associated with a chronological sequence of events; chronological sequence is, of course, the dominating relationship between the elements of a narrative. Common connective features are: conjunctions, conjunctive phrases and clauses, serial linkage and absence of terminals.

Toura has two very frequent conjunctions operating as connectives at the string level: le indicates chronological sequence and ke indicates most kinds of logical connection. Under certain conditions le and ke are also used as linkers between paragraphs. This cross-level function of connectives seems to

be a widespread phenomena. It reflects the fact that essentially the same kinds of semantic relationships exist between larger units such as sentences and paragraphs as exist between clauses, such as temporal sequence, simultaneity, cause-effect, contrast (but..., however..., in spite of it...), addition (also), etc.

You may, however, find that simple conjunctions function mostly between lower level units (clauses), whereas the corresponding relationship between higher level units is more commonly signalled by the use of a conjunctive phrase or clause.

There are a number of types of conjunctive phrases and clauses (expressions and clauses functioning in a way analagous to conjunctions). These seem to occur in many West African languages and are usually translated by conjunctions (then, and then, etc.) or adverbs (afterward, immediately, etc.):

(a) Repetitive margin, also called overlap, tail-head linkage (Longacre), or recapitulation. '...and he arrived at the village//when he had arrived there,'. There is not always complete repetition of the end of the preceding unit at the beginning of the following unit. In the case of 'went...arrived', the linkage is associative and expresses continuance. On the other hand, the linkage 'he said to them.../when they heard this...' expresses reciprocity.

(b) Anaphoric clauses are similar to repetitive margins but tend to recapitulate not only the 'tail' but the whole of the preceding larger unit: 'after this had happened...', 'when this was finished...', 'while this was being done...'

(c) Time margins are distinguished from the preceding types of conjunctive clauses by the fact that they do not recapitulate, but rather introduce a new temporal setting: 'when some time had passed...', 'when the morning comes...'

There is probably a tendency for the recapitulatory types to connect units of the lower levels, whereas time margins would typically occur as linkers of paragraphs or episodes. While they seem to appear in the form of clauses in many cases, it should not be overlooked that they may also take the simpler form of a temporal phrase, such as 'one day', 'just recently', etc.

(d) Thematic margins are most frequent in non-narrative discourse though they are by no means absent from narrative discourse. In narrative discourse thematic margins correspond mainly to changes of participants or shift of the goal of activity. At a paragraph boundary a thematic margin may serve to bring an element into focus which occurred non-focally in the preceding paragraph.

Serial linkage consists basically of a theoretically unlimited sequence of the same kind of unit. Particular connecting features accompany serial linkage: deletion (non-repetition) of the subject or objects in non-initial clauses, agreement of tenses and aspects, etc.

Absence of terminals may figure as a negative connecting (or demarcative) feature. Thus the absence of final le in Toura narrative indicates, under most conditions, that the same activity phase is continuing.

Sometimes conjunctive clauses may be replaceable by simple conjunctions of the 'and' or 'then' kind. In this case it is sensible to call the latter, with Longacre, pro-margins.

Finally, it should be noted that features functioning as connectives at a given level will usually function as demarcative features--initial or final markers (cf. section 3.1)--at the next lower level. Thus, if time margins function as connectives at discourse level, they function at the same time as introducers of certain types of paragraphs. Sequence of tenses and aspects may also be viewed as a connective feature.

3.4 Selection

Assuming the aspect system of a language consists of four terms, A, B, C, and D, and assuming only A and B occur in the narrative being considered, then the association of A and B with this type of discourse is a selectional feature of the narrative. The selection of tense and aspect, as well as the selection of certain grammatical constructions, the selection of personal pronouns and the selection of certain particles are discussed in this section.

The selection of mood, tense and aspect is important in many languages. For example, Toura has a special modal subsystem of narrative aspects. However, the climax of the narrative is sometimes marked by a shift to the declarative mood. This also involves a shift of construction type from the connected series to juxtaposed independent clauses. The change of aspect or tense may also be one of the main features marking off descriptive parts against progress oriented parts of the narrative. Or, something like an historic present may occur in certain slots, such as the climax.

Sequence of tenses or aspects can be an important factor in establishing coherence of larger units. The Toura narrative mood contains four main aspectual forms as presented in Chart 1.

	punctiliar	dynamic
completive	A	B
incompletive	C	D

Chart 1

A survey of aspect sequences occurring in the narrative string leads to the following observations: (1) A may only be followed by A or by B, B only by B or by C, C only by C or by D. D occurs sequence-finally only. These co-occurrence restrictions apply only to the principal clauses of the string; aspects of dependent clauses are either completely autonomous or governed by other types of sequence constraints. (2) If B occurs after A, or D after C, B and D express a marked target of an activity span or paragraph. Grammatically, B and D function as final markers of the string. For example, when John the Baptist finally baptised Jesus after having first objected to it, this event would be expressed by the marked target aspect. But it is to be noted that B, not preceded by A has neither a marked target component of meaning, nor does it relate to a particular position in the string. (3) The sequence B-C implies that the actions referred to by the two (or more) clauses are viewed by the speaker as a single event unit. In contrast, B presents the actions as two separate event units.

Sequence of aspects can be a strong factor of coherence. On the other hand, whenever the constraints on aspect sequence are not followed, as in Toura when a sequence C-B occurs, a limit separating two paragraphs will be posited between the first and the second aspect.

Certain construction types may be selected. Elliptical sentences may occur in particular discourse types, or in particular slots, such as title or climax. Some serial constructions tend to be particular to narrative, or at least to chronological sequences. I do not know if serial verb constructions (with subject deletion) are also limited in this way in some languages. Focus and emphasis: one type of emphasis is practically absent from chronological event sequences in Toura. Bimoba traditional narrative is basically non-focal (Jacobs 1970:281). There may be special forms introducing reported speech in the narrative. In Toura, short quotations are usually introduced by an elliptical construction, omitting the verb of speaking which is normally present. The use of the non-elliptical form marks a paragraph break since it indicates, typically, the beginning of a new topic in the reported dialogue or conversation.

Certain personal pronouns may be selected for a discourse. It is typical of narrative (except personal accounts) that the participants are referred to using the third person pronouns; first and second person pronouns do not usually occur apart from quotations. It is significant, therefore, when the speaker intrudes into the narrative by using the first person pronoun, or speaks directly to the hearer using the second person. The latter may, for example, be a device to signal the climax of the story. Some languages use the second person singular to refer to a main participant of the story (reported for at least one Chadic language). Hortatory speech sometimes involves selection of certain personal pronouns. Thus, in Toura, general hortatory (i.e. not addressed to a specific person) often uses the second person singular pronoun in combination with the generic term 'person', which also means 'one (indefinite person)'.

Conversational particles expressing doubt, surprise, impatience, politeness, etc. are typical of conversation but are untypical (except in quotations) of narrative discourse. Certain junctive features and connectives may be selected for a discourse to the exclusion of others. (See Sections 3.1 and 3.2.)

3.5 Identification and Reference

It is necessary to observe carefully how participants are introduced into the text, and how they are referred to in later occurrences. The domains within which certain rules of reference apply may correspond with major subdivisions of the discourse. In any case, reference patterns constitute a strong factor of coherence.

Initially the following distinctions need to be made:

(1) The introduction of new participants and reference to participants previously identified. New participants are usually introduced at the beginning of a narrative, but are sometimes introduced in the middle. Reference to a previously identified participant is either close reference (the referent occurs in the immediately preceding context) or distant reference (the referent is absent from the immediately preceding context and is reintroduced).

(2) Main participants and secondary participants.

(3) Participants in focus and participants out of focus.

These features form intersecting dimensions which can be charted as in Chart 2.

Chart 2

		c	d
a	e	(A)	
	f		
b	e	close (B) / distant (D)	
	f	close (C) / distant (E)	(C) / (E)

a - first introduction
b - reintroduction
c - main participant
d - secondary participant
e - participant in focus
f - participant out of focus

(A) Introduction of main participant in focus (a-e-c). 'someone (a certain king/three men) is/are there' (in folktales use past tense). This form is also used in the middle of discourse.

(B) Reference (close) to main participant in focus (b-c-e-close). Within a given unit (not yet defined), this reference is pronominal, even if another potential referent, though out focus, is closer to the pronoun.

(C) Reference (close) to participant out of focus (b-c/d-f-close) in the case of unambiguous reference ties. Where the relationship between pronoun and referent would present an ambiguity, an identifying noun followed by an identificational deictic is used: 'that (same) king'.

(D) Distant reference to main participant who is reintroduced and brought into focus (b-c-e-distant). A thematic margin including an identificational deictic is used to reintroduce and focus a main participant. 'man-who-is-existing-that (already mentioned)...' (In this story there are several main participants who are introduced together at the beginning. Then their respective fates are told successively and in different stages. A thematic margin appears whenever another one of the main participants comes into focus.)

(E) Distant reference to participant out of focus (b-c/d-f-distant). The participant is identified by a noun, followed by a copula and an identificational deictic: 'the-king who was that (previously mentioned)'.

The chart with examples given above is for the Toura language. Depending on the language, there may be other features which are relevant to the structure of participant reference that should be included in the chart while some of those included here are not relevant.

There are some additional points to consider when studying participant identification and reference:

(1) The rules governing participant identification tend to be different for participants designated by their proper name. Note that animals representing a well known character are often treated this way (spider, etc.).

(2) What are the rules governing pronominal reference? Does the carry-over of pronominal reference across sentence boundaries stop at given points, and do these points coincide with boundaries of major subdivisions?

(3) There may be special rules governing the identification of speakers in reported conversation.

(4) Change of participant roles or change of focus may correspond regularly with a major subdivision.

(5) How is potential ambiguity handled in the case of more than one participant, all of which would be referred to by the same anaphoric pronoun?

(6) In non-narrative discourse identificational features tend to bear more on themes than on participants.

3.6 Prominence

There are different kinds of prominence, all of which are not necessarily present as distinct form-meaning composites in a given language:

(1) Identificational emphasis (also called 'information focus' by Halliday). 'it's the men (not the women) who do the house building'.

(2) Contrastive emphasis: 'while the men do all the house building, the white washing is done by the women'. There is a double contrast in this example: men-women, house building-white washing. In some languages such contrast is marked by intonation and/or stress, but in Toura the contrasting elements are marked by special contrastive morphemes.

(3) Theme, which is also called topic: 'as far as white washing is concerned, this is the woman's job'.

(4) Intensity: 'they are m-m-many', 'they went and went and went and went'.

There is no doubt that the features of prominence have much bearing on higher level structures. We shall attempt to make just a few generalizations.

Emphasis may characterise the focus (or the goal) of a paragraph, especially in explanatory discourse and conversation. In this case, it plays a demarcational role comparable to that of sentence stress at the phonological level.

Emphasis is an important feature in explaining relationships between lower level units (in clause and sentence sequences).

Theme is often an initial marker of larger units, and at the same time a linkage feature at the next higher level (usually an element of the previous section becomes the theme of the subsequent section. Hence, theme constitutes a form of lexical linkage.

The frequency of prominence features (especially emphasis and theme) may have a diagnostic value for certain types of discourse. For example, narrative discourse may have no emphasis of a particular type, or very little, whereas in explanatory discourse every second sentence bears emphasis.

Emphasis and theme can be described in terms of information structures. The different parts of an utterance normally contrast by their information value (communication importance). Perhaps it is simplest to start out by distinguishing primary and secondary information values and assigning them to the different parts of a discourse. In doing this one should keep in mind the fact that, in order to account for complex structures, one may need to eventually distinguish more than two degrees of information value and also take into consideration other related features such as new vs. old, or expected vs. unexpected, information.

At the clause level it is useful to distinguish between marked and unmarked information structure. In unmarked information structure no single constituent contrasts formally with any of the other constituents in its information value. With marked information structure, one or more constituents are in focus and are formally marked for their communicative importance. Typical signalling devices for focus are front shifting, cleft constructions ('it is the man who...'), emphatic morphemes, stress and intonation and the use of special tone patterns or grammatical morphemes in that part of the sentence which is out of focus. There are often several types of marked information structure which may co-occur in the same clause under certain restrictions. Primary information focus coincides with the information centre of the message or at least of the sentence; it is what is being asserted. The rest of the utterance is out of focus (cf. identificational emphasis above). Secondary information focus serves to draw the attention of the listener to an element of importance which is often something already known but which is separate and subordinate to the scope of assertion of the utterance. Secondary information focus typically, but not exclusively, shows contrast (cf. contrastive emphasis above): '<u>I met Jack</u>, but I <u>missed Mary</u>.' (The double underlining marks the primary focus of assertion, single underlining the secondary information center.)

At the sentence level, primary information (which contains the scope of assertion) tends to be encoded in main or nuclear clauses, whereas dependent clauses tend to carry presuppositional information which provides the background for the main assertion. This contrast has been described as 'ground' vs. 'figure' by Taber (1966). At the discourse level, the ground-figure dichotomy may account, to some extent, for the subdivision into paragraphs. Paragraphs containing background information are often in a different aspect entirely, and may have special introducers and terminals. Ground elements often introduce paragraphs or strings. In Toura, ground elements introducing strings are different from ground elements introducing smaller units, such as sentences. In the narrative, smaller paragraphs are often introduced by ground element margins of time or circumstance manifested by a dependent clause ('when...'), but episodes tend to be introduced by a more involved construction ('it was when...').

The theme (or topic) operating at clause or sentence level within a discourse is usually given information. That which is added to it (the comment) is new information (that which is said about the theme). This is the direct opposite of identificational emphasis, which also presupposes a bipartite structure (the emphasised part and the non-emphasised part), but in which the emphasised part is new and the non-focal part tends to be given. The higher level theme, however, may contain new information.

3.7 Phonetic Features

Phonetic features relevant to the analysis of higher levels may include: tempo (acceleration or slowdown before the climax), melody (downdrift, final dropping of general height, change of key, widening of intervals between tones or absence of these features at certain points where they could be expected), sandhi (In Toura non-narrative discourse, the absence of a certain type of sentence final tone sandhi--substitution of mid-low to mid-high and to low in short syllables--fulfills the same function as the connective particles in narrative discourse), intensity (loudness), phonetic variation ('clear-cut' pronunciation in certain types or part of discourse), pauses (long vs. short vs. none).

3.8 Miscellaneous Features

Other features to be taken into account: complexity of constructions; rate of information (How much information is conveyed per unit, i.e. per clause, per sentence.); the use of intensives, ideophones and onomatopoeias may be associated with a certain style but also with certain types of discourse; and diverse stylistic variants (the use of certain archaic variant shapes of morphemes indicates solemn style in Toura; other variant forms, probably also archaic, are typical of proverbial style).

4. SOME PROCEDURAL STEPS

How can we bring some order into the mass of divergent and sometimes rather evasive data? There are two different approaches which are complementary to each other.

4.1 The Section-by-Section Approach

It is recommended to start working with straightforward narrative texts, since these tend to present a clear-cut type with fairly homogenous structure. The text is provisionally divided into chunks. The list of criteria given under Section 2 may help you to do this. Each chunk is examined in turn and the features found in it are listed. At the beginning, there is no use in trying to set up a strict hierarchy between the various subdivisions, and the various phenomena are labelled in a very tentative way.

It may be helpful to chart your findings as in Chart 3 but in a way adapted to your language and your personal preferences.

As a guide for listing the features, you can use the list given at the beginning of Section 3. You will soon find out which features recur continually in your data, and after some time it will be sufficient to list those recurrent entries which are relevant in your language.

You may feel that eight types of features are too complicated to handle. If so, you may reduce the list to three types:

Initial
Final
Linkage (or connecting)

Chart 3

Text X — Date: — Speaker: etc.

Subdivision	Features	Function (of features)	Reference Page, Line
INTRODUCTION			
Initial part	ke: nominal particle indeterminate nuu: past copula 6i: indeterminate locative	marks introduction of main participant	1, 1
Close	...le//	end of intro. paragraph	
Body of Introduction			
	SEQUENCE: Introd. part Expansion		
	CONNECTIVES: le...le... (alternating with emphatics		
	SELECTION: narrative string alternating with emphatic sentences		
	ASPECTS: narrative completive		
	REFERENCE: emphatic pronoun referring to main participant in expansion		
INITIAL NARRATIVE SECTION			
Introduction	PROM: ... 6e,...	Theme	1, 5
Whole section	SEQUENCE: initial string two medial strings final string	Activity phases	
	CONNECTIVES: ...le...le//le... le...le// etc.	Chronological sequence	
	ASPECTS: narrative complement	Progress of action	etc.

In fact, Longacre (on Philippine languages) has classified almost all the phenomena under these three general headings.

4.2 The Feature-by-Feature Approach

Instead of examining a text thoroughly bit by bit, you may choose instead, or as a second step, to select one particular feature and study its occurrence throughout the whole text.

This cross-hierarchical study is particularly important in order to discover the patterns of participant identification and reference, but it may be useful for other phenomena as well. It is possible to use a kind of charting similar to that of Chart 3.

5. PROBLEMS OF INTERPRETATION

Collecting and organising your data is one thing, interpreting it is another. There are difficulties of interpretation pertaining to higher level phenomena which are found to a lesser degree, or not at all on lower levels.

5.1 Multiplicity of Function

Some features have multiple functions. Whenever we want to assign a given feature to a certain level or unit, we have to ask "Does this feature only serve as a marker of this particular unit, or does it function in other ways as well?"

For example, ke 'but' in Toura appears sometimes to function as a paragraph introducer. But it also appears as a connective between two clauses, functioning at sentence level.

5.2 Multiplicity of Manifestation

A given function may be manifested in several ways. It can be quite irritating to find that a certain feature is typical of a unit (for example, as initial or final marker of a larger unit), but in some cases we are led to believe that the same unit occurs without this particular feature.

In Toura, '...le//' usually marks the end of a narrative string. However, when a string ends in a reported speech it does not always occur. It took quite a time to find out that it occurs after indirect speech but is absent after direct speech. So final le alternates with direct speech as final string marker, but not all direct speech is automatically string final. There is, therefore, some indeterminancy of string boundaries at this point.

The answer to these sorts of difficulties (multiplicity of function and manifestation) lies mainly in the fact that major subdivisions and distinctions between types will not usually be based on a single criterion, but on a whole set of converging criteria.

5.3 Difficulty of Checking with Substitution Tests

The experimental approach (elicitation-substitution tests) is difficult to apply at the higher levels.

The use of higher level features by native speakers is, of course, as with all other features of the grammar, subconscious. Hence they will be correctly reproduced in a natural context only; but it is difficult for the analyst to create a natural context for substitution of paragraphs.

Under artificial conditions, the structure of the text itself is likely to be changed. For example, paragraph subdivision may occur much more frequently in the case of a text elicited sentence by sentence. (See, however, Pike and Pike, 1972 for an experimental approach to discourse structure. See also application to Nepalese languages.)

5.4 Individual Variation between Speakers

We have to expect quite a bit of individual variation between speakers as to how consistently or how frequently they use certain features. Part of our task--very important for the purpose of translation--is to distinguish between:

What is general and what is individual.

What is in the center of social acceptability and what is peripheral or even eccentric usage of a single speaker.

What is obligatory and what is optional.

Nor should we expect every phenomena to fall neatly into one of these categories, but there will be in many cases a cline between the general and the individual, general acceptability and eccentricity.

5.5 Volume of Data Needed:

To reach conclusions on matters like those mentioned under Section 5.4 we would need to have a great many texts. It is easy to get 1,000 sentences in a language and additional complementary information on sentence structure through elicitation, but it is quite another matter to get 100 texts analysed and compared.

5.6 Features Not Represented in Translation

Features pertaining to the organisation of higher level structures are not necessarily represented in the translation given by your language helper. Whether a certain connective is there or not will not make any difference of meaning to him. It takes a lot of time and experience to find out the meaning or function of these 'nuances', which are by no means negligible.

5.7 Speed and Subdivisions

One important phenomenon to watch out for is the correlation between speed and the number of subdivisions. There seems to be a correlation between these two factors in many cases--the higher the speed, the smaller the number of subdivisions.

5.8 No Established Terminology

There is no well established terminology on discourse phenomena. Phenomena are labelled more or less ad hoc as they occur, and this accounts for the wide diversity of new terms which makes it sometimes difficult to follow descriptions of higher level phenomena.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The paper has been extensively revised by Connie Currier for inclusion in NL.

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PHILIPPINE 1978 WORKSHOPS

Translation

Bagabag:

Translation Orientation 30 Jan-17 Feb
Consultant Training 20 Feb-3 Mar
Checking 6 Mar-7 Apr

Nasuli:

One Book 17 Apr-5 (or 12) May
Translation Orientation 2-20 Oct
Consultant Training 23 Oct-10 Nov
Checking 6 Nov-8 (or 15) Dec

General Orientation (for new members)

Manila: 20-24 Mar

Literacy

Materials
(these dates are tentative)

Bagabag: 6 Nov-15 Dec
Nasuli: 17 Jul-25 Aug

Linguistics

Discourse

Bagabag: 1 Aug-15 Sep